I've been very busy, for this church is gearing up to do some great things. It is taking all the discipline I can muster to stay ahead of it. I seek to sponsor quality programs that excite the people. I've seen too many churches where programs were poorly organized. I try to involve as many folks as possible. Our attendance and participation inch up from week to week. One thing we have been studying together is *The Last Will and Testament* by Thomas Campbell. — *Larry O. Toney, First Christian Church (Disciples), New Kensington, Pennsylvania*

We owe you a debt of gratitude for introducing us to the wonderful Hook family. Our family has ordered many copies of both *Free In Christ* and *Free To Speak* for distribution to friends. — *Dorothy Keen, Manhattan, Kansas*

(If you are interested in the books referred to, and you will find them liberating, write to Cecil Hook, 1350 Huisache, New Braunfels, Texas 78130, or call 512-625-1613. The first book is free, the other only $4.00 postpaid. — *Ed.*)

The mainline unity forums are great today, but they are 15 to 20 years behind the ones I recall with you, Carl Ketcherside, Don DeWelt and others of yesteryear. — *Fred J. White, Tulsa, Oklahoma*

(Yes, and when we go back an additional two decades or so there were the efforts of Claude Witty and DeForest Murch. So maybe we have an evolution here, if that is not a bad word! Another generation or so down the road we may wonder why we were so long in finding a working relationship with Christian Churches, even if we will not have an ecclesial union. Acceptance is what unity is about anyway, acceptance *as equals.* Organizational union is something else and maybe not very important. — *Ed.*)

There is a lot of renewed interest in the Spirit's role these days, perhaps because of the confusion the charasmatic people seem to have stirred. I think it is good, all of us need to learn more about how we can comply with the great admonition to be *filled with the Spirit.* — *Rachel Howard, Anderson, Indiana*

(That admonition in Eph. 5:18 is most appropriate for the modern church, which is threatened by both cultic and intoxicating spirits, as well as the spirit of consumerism. The apostle urged an infilling of the Spirit upon those who had already received the Spirit when they became Christians (Eph. 1:13), which indicates that the Spirit's presence within the believer is an ongoing filling and refilling. — *Ed.*)

We are pleased to continue our offer of a free copy of *The Stone-Campbell Movement* by Leroy Garrett when you send us a club of eight subscribers, new or renewals, which may include your own. This means you can send this paper to yourself and seven others and receive a free copy of the history book for only $24.00, postpaid. That's a bargain, and we are gratified that so many take advantage of this offer. But you *must,* when you send in your list and your check, request the bonus copy of the book.

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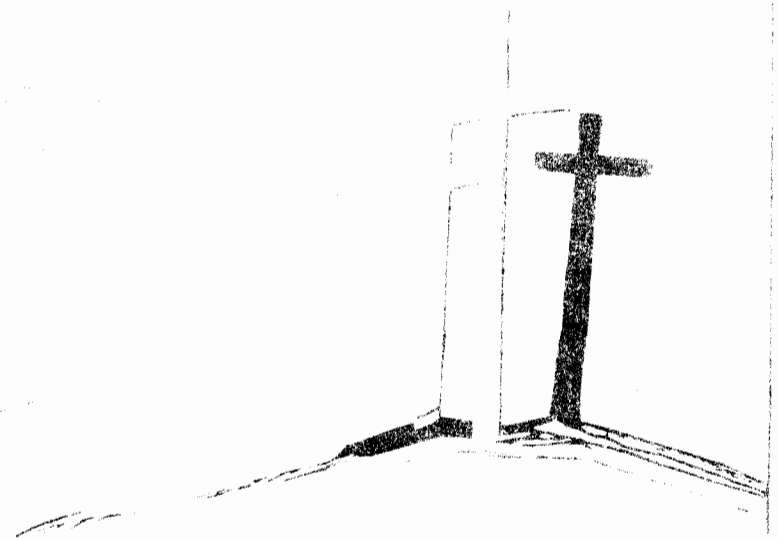

Through decades of gradual erosion, the meaning of life in the West has ceased to be seen as anything more lofty than the "pursuit of happiness." The concepts of good and evil have been ridiculed for several centuries. The West is slipping towards the abyss, losing more and more of its religious essence as it thoughtlessly yields up its younger generation to atheism. — *Alexander Solzhenitsyn*

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Adventures of the Early Church . . .

THE SIN WORSE THAN SODOMY

One way to measure a religion is by its attitude toward sin. The Japanese, for instance, who are Shintoists and Buddhists, have a view of sin so different from the Judeo-Christian conception that it is difficult to reach them with the gospel. To most orientals a sinner is a malefactor, such as a murderer or thief, and they have a problem in seeing pride and selfish ambition as sin.

Even within our own Christian tradition there are sins and then there are sins, depending on whom one chooses to listen. The Pharisees had their list and Jesus had his. While the Pharisees were preoccupied with breaches in ceremonial law, Jesus talked about man's corruption emanating from his heart, such as covetousness, wickedness, evil thoughts, deceit, envy, slander, pride, foolishness, and sensuality (Mk. 7:21-22). Perhaps there are lesser sins, but these are the sins that really matter, according to Jesus.

Except for one, the sin that is worse than sodomy, which I will point too directly. Some Old Testament background will help in understanding this sin, which at the same time points to the noblest of the virtues.

While Israel had a sacrificial system whereby her sins could be expiated, there were two sins that were excepted, sins that could not be atoned for through animal sacrifices. These were murder and rape. Murder was unpardonable because it killed the body, rape because it killed the soul. Since David was guilty of both of these sins, some of his psalms really come alive when they are read with this in mind. Since his sins were too grievous to be atoned for at the alter, David had no recourse but old-fashioned repentance in which he laid his soul bare and begged God for mercy.

This is especially evident in Ps. 51, one of the greatest of the psalms. It begins: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy steadfast love; according to thy abundant mercy blot out my transgressions." David lusted for a woman and then, by his power as king, forced himself upon the woman, *rape.* In hope of covering his foul deed he went on to murder her husband. Having no recourse to the sacrifical

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law for these "presumptuous" or "high-handed" sins, as they are called in Scripture, he could only sue for God's mercy, his overflowing grace. He agonized over these sins: "My sin is ever before me," he says, and he cries out "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned," which really meant that he had sinned *especially* against God, with whom he was in covenant relation.

Ah, *covenant* relationship. That is why he cried out for God's *hesed* (lovingkindness or mercy), for he believed God would remain faithful to the covenant even when he had failed. David came to see what God really wanted or what religion is all about: "The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise (Ps. 51:17). Once God has one's broken heart, the psalmist says, "then wilt thou delight in right sacrifices." So concerned are religious folk with *right* sacrifices, that they forget the broken and contrite heart. Isa. 66:2 confirms this: "This is the one to whom I will look, he that is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word."

I am convinced that this is why David is called "a man after God's own heart," the only one in Scripture of which this is said. Yes, the man who had committed the worst of sins was the one closest to the heart of God. Why? Because his ugly sins brought him to his knees in humble contrition. He was broken before God, pleading for his *hesed,* that unconditional grace that only a person deep in sin can appreciate. David was like the man that Jesus pointed to as "justified," the one who simply cried out from the depth of despair, "God, be merciful to me a (literally *the*) sinner." The "religious" man in the story also prayed but he was himself having no such need (Lk. 18:10-14).

This is the spirit of both Testaments. It is the humble person who seeks God that is acceptable rather than the "proper" person who supposes he is righteous because he follows the correct ritual. Such as in Ps. 24:3 where the question is posed as to who will dwell in God's holy hill or in his presence. "He who has clean hands and a pure heart," is the answer, clean hands referring to one who sincerely tries to do right by others, while a pure heart refers to that singleness of mind to will one thing: to do God's will the best one knows how, however stumbling that may be.

Now we are prepared to understand the sin that is worse than sodomy, for it is the opposite spirit from the broken and contrite heart. It is the heart of indifference, the mind that is calloused and hardened by wilful neglect. It is the sin of not caring, even amidst heaven's blessings.

Today's homosexual church reminds us that Jesus said nothing about homosexuality as a sin, though he named many sins. In fact, his only allusion to homosexuality is in Mt. 11:24, they note, where he refers to ancient Sodom and says, "It shall be more tolerable on the day of judgment for Sodom than for you."

When one considers the whole of Scripture, there is little comfort in the fact that Jesus does not specifically name homosexual *acts*, which should be distinquished from homosexuality as such. Neither does he name bestiality, child abuse, or drug addiction. His injunction that we seek to do God's will on earth as it is done in heaven should be enough to monitor a person's sexual life, without looking for all the specifics.

The fact remains, however, that our Lord's only reference to sodomy is to score a more serious sin. Sodom would have repented, he surprisingly asserts, if it had had the light that came to the cities of Galilee "Where most of his mighty works had been done." That illustrates how little we really know about Jesus of Nazareth. Most of his work was done in Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, and yet the gospel narratives tell us nothing about what happened in those cities. But one crucial fact comes through loud and clear: *they would not repent even when they had overwhelming evidence for what God was doing in their midst.*

This was a worse sin than the sin of Sodom because the people of Sodom were not given as much light as the cities of Galilee. Jesus is not excusing the Sodomites. Their sin is still there. He is rather saying what religious folk are slow to see: *responsibility is measured by opportunity.* It will be more tolerable for Sodom, Jesus says, because their opportunity to understand was not as great. They were less responsible because they had less light. The greater the light the greater the responsibility.

This is why sins of the heart are more serious than sins of the understanding. The greatest sin of all is not to care what God has done for sinful man.

Capernaum was condemned by Jesus — "You shall be brought down to hell!" — not because they threw stones at him or tried to kill him, but because they ignored him when he preached to them the kingdom of God. Theirs was a sin of wilful ignorance. If Sodom had witnessed the glorious presence of God in the person of Jesus as did the cities of Galilee, they would have repented, our Lord says in Mt. 11:23. It is an amazing declaration! It reveals a great deal about the nature of sin: a fat, stubborn, obstinate heart is far worse than imbecility of understanding.

This weighty truth should make us all the more reluctant to judge others. We do not know all the facts as to why people behave the way they do. However steeped in error a person may seem to be, God will judge him by the opportunities he has had. Man looks upon outward appearance while God looks upon the heart. We have no way of seeing into the heart.

We Americans need to take a grave look at Jesus' judgment of "It shall be more tolerable" for those who have had less light. God's grace has been bounteous in our nation. We have churches everywhere and there are Bibles in virtually every room of our homes. We have had more freedom to read, to think, and to grow than any nation in human history. What have we done with the light that has illumined our way? How much do we really care? Even within the church how indifferent are we?

While we might deem it unthinkable that Jesus would ever say "It shall be more tolerable for Sodom than for America," it is a judgment that could be forthcoming. And if we apply this principle to our own heritage as a unity movement, we might ponder the judgment that "it will be more tolerable" for various sects than for the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ, to whom "Unity is our polar star" has shown with great luminosity.

How many denominations have had a Barton Stone and an Alexander Campbell to pass along the torch of Christian liberty? It is just possible that a betrayal of a great heritage of unity and freedom is a more serious sin than the sin of ancient Sodom. — *the Editor*

DO WE HAVE TO AGREE TO ACCEPT EACH OTHER?

The assumption that we have to see eye-to-eye on virtually every point of doctrine is the basis of most divisions among Christians. So pervasive is this among Churches of Christ that we are divided into many factions, and no faction is at liberty to be loving and accepting toward the others, for the bitter price of sectism is that you can love and accept only those who are of your persuasion. This often affects members of the same family who belong to different parties, who can't do anything "religious" together. At family gatherings they can discuss sports or the stock market but they can't talk about the Lord they all profess to follow.

And wherein do such ones differ? It is nearly always in reference to methods and incidentals. If we cannot differ in matters of opinion and

personal preferences and receive each other as equals in Christ, then there is no hope for the unity for which our Lord prayed. It is as natural for people to differ in opinions as it is for them to differ in their looks and speech.

The essence of our plea as a unity movement that reaches back to the days of Barton Stone and Alexander Campbell is that believers can and must unite upon essentials or fundamentals while allowing freedom of opinion. And so we have had the motto: "In matters of faith, unity; in matters of opinion, liberty; in all things, love." They had another saying that may be more to the point: "We are free to differ but not to divide."

It is amazing that people with such a meaningful heritage would actually use division as a problem-solving device. When we differ with each other to any substantial degree, we divide and start another congregation. Moreover, we actually use the very Bible that urges us to be united to justify our factions. We abuse such passages as Amos 3:3, "Can two walk together, except that they be agreed?" (KJV), by making them mean that we must see everything alike if we enjoy fellowship together. One only has to read Amos 3:3 in context, especially in the improved versions, to see that it has nothing to do with fellowship being predicated upon agreement. It is rather noting that if two people show up at the same place at the same time, it is because they agreed to do so. Amos is saying that is why he is doing the work of a prophet. God called him.

If the prophet *were* asking if two people can walk together or be in fellowship unless they agree on everything, the answer would have to be a resounding *Yes, of course.* If people who disagree on some things cannot walk together, then no two people can walk together! It is just that simple.

The prophets disagreed on some things; the apostles did not see everything alike. Even Jesus and the apostles sometimes differed, for they often did not know what he was talking about. Up to the very end, on the night of the betrayal in the upper room, they were arguing among themselves.

Those mottoes that plead for unity in essentials and liberty of opinion in non-essentials are universally accepted among us as valid. I have not yet met a person among us who did not agree that we should unite upon "matters of faith" and allow freedom in "matters of opinion." The big hangup is over what is faith and what is opinion. Our pioneers recognized this problem and believed they found the solution.

An opinion is a deduction drawn from what the Scriptures actually say, which may or may not be a correct deduction. In either case it is an opinion and cannot be imposed upon others "except as they see the

connection," as Thomas Campbell put it in his *Declaration and Address.*

A matter of faith, or an essential, is what the Bible says clearly and distinctly in so many words. We can agree on what it actually says with *no* interpretation.

An example would be that exciting line in 2 Tim. 3:16: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." We can even define the word *inspiration* to mean "God-breathed." Unity! Leave it there and there is no problem. But when we draw a deduction from that line and conclude that the Scriptures are inerrant, infallible, and verbally inspired we have injected theological speculation which may or may not be right. It is all right to do this — "In opinions liberty" — but it must be held only as an opinion and not imposed upon others as essential.

Another example is Eph. 5:19: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." We can all agree on what is clearly and distinctly stated, that we are to praise God in singing. Questions of sheet music, shaped notes, instrumentation, choirs, solos are matters of opinion.

To get into heavy theology there is: "My Father and I are one" (Jn. 10:30), which has produced heretics and councils through the centuries when made a matter of speculation of *how* the Father and Son are one. Our pioneers used this passage as an example of how they would accept what is written *as a matter of faith* and not make any speculation a test of fellowship.

Are we to agree? Yes, on what is clearly stated in Scripture. When a passage is not clear even as it stands written, we will not be dogmatic but conciliatory. As to what a passage *means* by what it says, we will encourage open and free investigation and allow for differences. But we will *not,* for the sake of peace and harmony, make our interpretation a test for others — except as they see the connection for themselves.

And as we measure what essentials mean, we must remember that basically there is but one essential and that is the person of Jesus Christ. He was their source of unity and he is ours. When we meet a person who reflects the Spirit of Christ, we have the starting point for love and acceptance. If I would love and accept Jesus Christ, then I will love and accept as an equal all those who sincerely seek to follow in his steps, however haltingly? That is the point at which agreement is really meaningful, a single-minded loyalty and devotion to Jesus Christ as the Lord of our lives. — *the Editor*

THE CAMPBELL MYTH

An advertisement of the 20th Annual Lectureship of the Memphis School of Preaching reminded me of what I will call the Campbell myth. I will explain what I mean.

The lectureship is honoring the pioneers of the Stone-Campbell heritage and Thomas and Alexander Campbell head the list. These heroes of yesteryear will no doubt be praised for the great men they were, and the implication will be that those gathered for the lectures stand within the grand tradition of the Campbells. The Campbells will not be ridiculed as liberals or heretics, as some of the rest of us are, but as defenders of the faith and as the heroes of those assembled. This is the myth. It is a myth because those among us who really believe as the Campbells did are summarily rejected by these same brethren as apostates from the faith. It is a myth because these brethren could not possibly fellowship the Campbells if they were among us today.

But the Campbell myth deepens when we realize that in all our factions among Christian Churches/Churches of Christ there is a reluctance to break fellowhsip with our roots, especially Alexander Campbell, however tenuous the relationship with our pioneers may be. No one is willing to make a complete break with Alexander Campbell, however foreign he may appear to us in our sectarian biases. I have noticed this on numerous occasions when I myself was being put down, even as I quoted Alexander Campbell as believing the very thing for which I was being rejected.

I recall one instance in particular here in Denton when visiting ministers repudiated me publicly for believing that there are Christians among the sects. While I could make no reply publicly, I did confront my accusers "down front," and with a crowd gathered around us I pointed out that our noble leaders have all believed that there were Christians among the sects, and that included Alexander Campbell, who had been lauded that very day as one of our heroes. But I could not get my accusers to admit that this was Campbell's position or to repudiate him for it. "Will you disfellowship Alexander Campbell for believing there are Christians among the sects like you do me?," I would ask, pressing the point as the crowd edged in. I could not get them to reject Campbell for believing what they condemned me for believing.

That is the myth. I was reminded of it all over again when I noticed that these same brethren are calling Goebel Music to speak on "False Witnesses: Stopping the Mouth of the 'Christians in the Sects' Teaching." Goebel speaks after Billy Bland delivers his tribute to "Pioneers on Preaching: Thomas and Alexander Campbell." Goebel

and Billy need to get together. Since both of the Campbells clearly and emphatically believed that there were Christians among the sects, Billy should expose the Campbells for what they really were, heretics whose mouths need to be stopped, and then Goebel can shoot them down as apostates and false brethren rather than noble pioneers of our heritage.

But Goebel will not do this. While these brethren will castigate the likes of Rubel Shelly for this more open view of who is a Christian, as I heard them do at a recent Denton lectureship, they do not want to admit that Rubel has Alexander Campbell on his side. While no one looks to Campbell as authoritative, we all seem reluctant to hold a view that leaves us rootless in reference to our own history. This is probably a good thing, for we all need to have sufficient respect for our forebears as to learn from them. We can draw upon them *selectively,* following them only as they follow Christ and the apostles.

Moreover, it is one thing to call Rubel Shelly or Leroy Garrett names, but something else to add *and Alexander Campbell* to the list of heretics. They do not want to put us in such elegant company or in such a respected class. Besides, it doesn't make sense to eulogize Campbell in one session and to disfellowship him in the next! So, by some strange logic Alexander Campbell escapes their wrath. It is a case of logic yielding to myth. If they were to come to terms with the *real* Alexander Campbell, they wouldn't give him the time of day in terms of acceptance and fellowship. As Eusebius tells how the apostle John fled the bathhouse when he learned that Cerenthus the heretic was there, these fellows might take off should the real Campbell come around.

That Alexander Campbell did indeed believe that there were Christians among the sects, even unimmersed ones, we have often shown in these pages. A brief review will be in order.

Such as the quotation we published on the front page of our February issue:

> I declare non-fellowship with no one who owns the Lord in word and deed. Such is a Christian. If a man confess the Lord Jesus, or acknowledge him as the only Saviour sent by God; if we vow allegiance to him, and submit to his government, I will recognize him as a Christian and treat him as such. (*Chris. Bap.,* Vol. 7, 1830, p. 651, Burnet Ed.)

Then there is this from the well-known Lunenberg Letter:

> But who is a Christian? I answer, Every one that believes in his heart that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the Son of God; repents of his sins, and obeys him in all things according to his measure of knowledge of his will. (Mill. Harb., 1837, p. 411)

It is in this letter that he goes on to say: "I cannot, therefore, make any one duty the standard of Christian state or character, not even immersion." He then makes a distinction seldom recognized among his heirs today: "It is the image of Christ the Christian looks for and

loves; and this does not consist in being exact in a few items, but in general devotion to the whole truth as far as known."

Campbell always showed charity toward those "in error" who had not yet found their way, recognizing that they were Christians, such as: "But while we remember our own mistakes and the systems and teaching of our time, we must acknowledge many to be Christians who are led away and corrupted from the simplicity of Christ" (*Mem. of Alex Campbell,* Vol. 2, p. 62). It would be refreshing to hear this kind of graciousness at the Denton or Memphis lectureships.

The *real* Campbell was not even himself baptized scripturally, if these brethren are right. His biographer, Robert Richardson, makes it clear that it was ten years after he had been immersed, in the McCalla debate, that he came to see the doctrine of baptism for the remission of sins. He believed that he was a Christian all along and not only at the point that he was immersed. He was immersed because he was convinced that he had not been baptized properly. But he never in his long ministry took a hard line on immersion, such as it being absolutely essential to salvation, as he clearly states in the Rice debate: "Because I do not make baptism absolutely essential to salvation in any case, while he makes the knowledge of Christ absolutely necessary in all cases." (p. 519).

In that debate Mr. Rice came down hard on Campbell for what he had said about baptism in the McCalla debate, insisting that Campbell was inconsistent. This is what Campbell had said: "The water of baptism, then, formally washes away our sins. The blood of Christ really washes away our sins. Paul's sins were really pardoned when he believed; yet he had no solemn pledge of the fact, no formal acquittal, no formal purgation of his sins, until he washed them away in the water of baptism."(p. 516)

If the fellows in Memphis had a liberal like that on tape, they would give him a harder time than Rice gave Campbell. But Campbell never considered this an inconsistency, for he always avoided a legalistic view of baptism. After all, baptism is not for the remission of sins in *every* sense but only in some sense. Campbell interpreted baptism in relation to the grace of God and the blood of Christ, which is why he sometimes referred to baptism as "the work of grace."

In that same debate with Rice the sage of Bethany spoke even plainer about where the Christians are:

> I thank my Lord that my charities extend far beyond the contents of that little book lying on the table (pointing to the constitution of the Presbyterian church). Yes, sir, while I go for only one true catholic, apostolic church, and while I cannot find it in any of these Pedo-baptist "branches," I can find Christian people among them all. (p. 496)

Would that our "Lectureship" brethren were as charitable as Alexander Campbell! If they cannot be, they might opt to come clean and acknowledge that they have little in common with Alexander Campbell, certainly in the area of fellowship and baptism.

But it goes beyond baptism and fellowship, such as his aversion to sectarianism and the notion that "we" have all the truth. Such as this tremendous statement:

> I have tried the pharisaic plan and the monastic. I was once so straight that, like the Indian's tree, "I leaned a little the other way." And however much I may be slandered now as seeking "popularity" or a popular course, I have to rejoice that to my own satisfaction, as well as to others', I proved that truth and not popularity was my object; for I was once so strict a separatist that I would neither pray nor sing praises with any one who was not as perfect as I supposed myself. In this most unpopular course I persisted until I discovered the mistake, and saw that on the principle embraced in my conduct there never could be a congregation or church upon the earth. (*Mem. of Alex Campbell,* Vol. 2, p. 137)

This is why Campbell moved among all the denominations and why he chose to identify with the Baptists. This statement alone would be enough to hang the real Campbell among his own people today!

> I do intend to continue in connection with this people (Baptists) so long as they will permit me to say what I believe; to teach what I am assured of, and to censure what is amiss in their views or practices. I have no idea of adding to the catalogue of new sects. (*Memoirs,* Vol. 2, p. 134)

It is noteworthy that both of the first two Churches of Christ under the Campbells joined Baptist associations. The Brush Run church joined the Mahoning and the Wellsburg church the Redstone Association.

These are not the only "sins' of the real Alexander Campbell. He was instrumental in organizing the first missionary society and was its (first) president for life. Moreover he supported it from some of the royalties from his books.

He saw his own religious body, called variously Disciples of Christ/Christian Churches/Churches of Christ, as a denomination (but never a sect, he insisted), using such terms as "We as a denomination," while "other denominations" often appears in his writings.

And he capitalized the *C* in church nearly always when he referred to the Church of Christ. The trial is over, that is sin enough!

He warmly fellowshipped "denominational" preachers, having them speak at the Bethany church and at his college. He heartily entertained them in his home, and, mark it, *wined* and dined them as brothers in Christ. I must concede that he was not that open toward the Roman clergy!

Well, that is enough, for the real Alexander Campbell, once he stands up, would be mercilessly dispatched by sectarian darts. There is no need in kicking a corpse.

In closing I could turn this around the other way and ask what Campbell would think of us, the twenty-odd sects that are his heirs. Which of us would he join if here today? Louis Cochran, that great Campbell scholar and novelist, asked that question in one of my services in Murfreesboro, Tn. years ago. He thought, perhaps graciously, that he would join the Church of Christ since he was anti-organ (even if barely!). But his wife Bess, a Campbell scholar in her own right, dissented, insisting that if he lived today he would be so disgusted that he wouldn't join any of us.

These women! They are always right! — *the Editor*

WITH WHOM WILL YOU WALK?

This question is a good way to get at the nature of fellowship and unity. *Walk* is an interesting metaphor in Scripture, whether referring to an evil life, such as "walking according to the flesh" (Rom. 8:1) and "walking as men" (2 Cor. 3:3), or to the virtuous life, as in "walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4) or "walk by faith" (2 Cor. 5:7). The metaphor even reaches out to express one of the great promises: "They will walk with me in white" (Rev. 3:4).

The word clearly means more than the act of taking steps, whether alone or with others. We all "walk" with lots of folk when no more is involved than taking steps together, whether it be on a crowded city street or an airport terminal. Close proximity itself does not suggest the unity and fellowship which we find in the scriptural use of *walk*, such as in Eph. 5:2: "Walk in love, just as Christ also loved you." Walking together suggests a sharing, caring, kindred relationship. So people may be together and even sit together, as at church, and yet not walk together in the sense of joyous fellowship.

Somewhere along the way we've had laid on us an odd interpretation of an Old Testament passage. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3) has been made to mean that there cannot be unity and fellowship (walking together) unless there is doctrinal agreement. One only needs to look at the passage in context to see that this is an unlikely meaning — or simply consult most any version beside the King James. The prophet is listing a series of cause and effect statements to show that the reason he is prophesying (effect) is that God has called him (cause). In the

list is the circumstance of two men meeting (effect) because they made an appointment (cause). So if the KJV is used in Amos 3:3 it should be understood this way: "How can two walk together (effect) unless they agreed (or made an appointment) to walk together (cause)." The passage has nothing to do with whether people have to believe alike or have the same opinions before they can enjoy each other's company or be in fellowship.

The idea that we cannot walk or associate with others in any religious sense except on grounds of absolute or near absolute agreement is contrary both to Scripture and common sense. Did not Peter and Paul disagree? Does not the very idea of forbearance imply that we are to walk together in spite of differences? Indeed, if we walk with anyone at all it will have to be with someone with whom we have differences, for there are no two people in the world who see everything alike.

We have seen that the prophet never said "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" in the sense we are talking about, but if someone should ask that question in that sense the answer would have to be a resounding *Yes, of course, people walk together who do not agree!* It is surely the case with every man and his wife. Moreover, we *should* walk together when we differ. How can we become more united except by being with each other?

It is not a question of whether we have differences and will continue to have, but a question of whether we will accept each other in spite of those differences and embrace one another in loving fellowship.

That brings us back to our question, *With whom will you walk?* I am referring to those who profess to be Christians. Are we to walk with some but not with others? Where are we to draw the line?

My own answer is that I will walk with anyone who is resolved to be a follower of Christ. I will make no test except a desire to be like Christ and to follow his way of life. What is more Christian than for one to apply the lordship of Jesus Christ to every circumstance of life, to the best of his knowledge and ability, and to reflect Christ's love in his relation to others? This is what it means to be a Christian, and I will walk in humble gratitude with any person who seeks to emulate the spirit of Christ, however stumbling his efforts may be.

There will be differences with those with whom I walk, but there is a bond that is stronger than the differences, and that is our common love for Jesus. Together we believe *in* Christ, and the *in* is important since it points up the bond of union. We can believe *in* Christ together without believing exactly the same thing about him. It is true with ourselves. We can believe in each other even when we hold diverse views about both politics and religion.

I do not have to dictate *what* one believes about Jesus before I walk with him. If he is resolved to follow Christ and I am resolved to follow Christ, even if the reasons are not exactly the same, that should be all that either of us should ask.

In our walk together we are always to be free to say what we believe and to practice it uncompromisingly. No one objects to my saying "I believe in congregational polity" so long as I do not charge those who have a presbyterial or episcopal polity with being apostates. Those who walk with us will respect us for believing in baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, and they will not object when we affirm it with "all longsuffering and teaching," but we must not be self-righteous about it and condemn those who see and practice baptism differently. No one complains that at our Church of Christ in Denton we do not use instruments of music, but protests would be appropriate if we demanded that all other churches must do it our way to be faithful to Christ.

No one objects to our believing we are right, but they do object when we believe we are right and everyone else is wrong.

So I will gladly walk with any fellow believer in Christ on those terms. Each of us remains vigorously faithful to everything he believes to be truth, with no compromise. We will even encourage one another to be true to his conscience and to what he believes God's will is for him. And we will always be free to share our faith with each other. When we cannot agree we will nonetheless respect and love each other as sisters and brothers, and keep right on walking together in the Lord. It is only when one of us is unfriendly, unloving, and unreasonable that walking together becomes difficult or impossible.

But walking together means more than forbearing one another in love. We will work together in what is good and we will unite against all forms of evil.

After many years of study on the nature of Christian unity and after attending numerous unity conferences, I am convinced that this is the only way to unity among believers. The only possible basis is our common love for Jesus Christ and our mutual desire to follow him. If we must wait until we see everything or most everything eye-to-eye, then we will never be united. Unity is more personal than doctrinal, even though doctrine is very important, for it is centered in the person of Jesus Christ.

So it was with the church at its beginning, or with those that became the church, for Mk. 3:14 says, when it recounts Jesus choosing his apostles, "I have chosen you to be with me." What was the basis of Jesus' choice of twelve men to be his companions? We can say that Jesus prayed about that decision and that his selection was based on the Father's will. But they were chosen because of the quality of their relationship to Jesus, their love and devotion to him.

Their call to be with him was hardly theological or doctrinal. They had probably not even heard of the virgin birth, the Holy Trinity, or the inerrancy of Scripture, all of which are required if we walk in some circles. While they had probably been baptized by John's baptism as Jesus was, we cannot *prove* that they had been baptized at this time. Even so their baptism was hardly the basis of Jesus calling them as his companions. It was their love and their potential for greater love that united them to Jesus.

Within that "call of love" — we walk together because we have a common love — we unite in promoting all that is good and right and we stand as one against all forms of tyranny and injustice. It is probable that no evil, such as slums or racial injustice, can prevail in any of our cities where Christians are united against it.

The basis of being together and working together — unity? The same thing that made Jesus and his disciples *companions*. If Jesus had waited until he achieved conformity in the thinking of Matthew Levi, the despised tax collector, and Simon Zealotes, the revolutionary, he would never have sent out twelve men "to preach the gospel and cast out devils."

And Matthew and Simon could do *that* together, tell the good news and attack the strongholds of evil. And that because of their mutual attraction to Jesus.

When together we tell the good news and unite against evil we come to know each other. Knowledge leads to understanding, mutual respect, love, and tolerance. We will then accept each other more and criticize less. It is the hate, insensitivity, and intolerance of disunity that is evil. Since love is more important than orthodoxy, we must see love as the grounds for walking together. — *the Editor*

THEY ALL MAY BE ONE

W. Carl Ketcherside

There are limitations to the prayer of Jesus. He does not ask that all men be one. It is here, I think, that some members of what is casually referred to as "the ecumenical movement" are in error. The word, like Catholic, refers to the whole world. It means universal. But Jesus is not a universalist. He, better than anyone else who has walked earth's trails, knew that Satan existed and that he deceived men. In their eagerness to see everyone who has drawn the breath of life eventually saved a great many of the gentler ecumenists have labored for the inclusion of all who worship gods of their own designs or thought processes.

Man, by nature is a religious being. He will worship something. An object of worship is as essential to him as food and drink. If he does not have it, he ends up being an atheist and worshipping himself. He imposes his puny and feeble mind to blank out the God of the universe. It is sometimes argued that it is not fair to judge those who have had no opportunity to hear about Jesus. But we need not judge them. God will judge them on the basis of absolute justice. This we cannot do. We can only approximate justice based upon the collected experience of the ages. But the prayer of the one who died for men is that all those who believe in Him may be one.

He prayed that they might be one, in the Father and in the Son. That sounds like the opening stanza of a new song, doesn't it? In reality it is the only hope we have of ever attaining oneness. Outside of Christ we are selfish, petulant, jealous and resentful. That is why political peace is a virtual impossibility. Hours upon hours of talk around the conference table end in futility. Brilliant men come to an impasse in negotiations. Meetings end in utter frustration. But if the world would come to believe we could meet as brothers rather than as antagonists. The burden of guilt lies squarely upon the shoulders of those of us who have pleaded for parties rather than peace. Our testimony has been misguided and has wreaked havoc in the hearts of men.

"As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee." Let me tell you how mistaken I once was about the import of those words. I was caught up in the vain fallacy of unity by conformity, an absolutely unattainable goal by thinking persons. The only possible way to attain even a semblance of it is for each person to unscrew his head and deposit under the rear seat while he listens only to a preacher. Even then, conformity will be only a physical acquiescence, for as soon as one retrieves his rational apparatus and turns it on he will find himself in some doubt. But I was like a wasp when I started preaching — bigger when first hatched out than at any other time. So I reasoned with my relatively passive and sleepy audiences that God and Christ had no differences of opinion. They saw everything exactly alike. And we had to do the same.

I do not know what changed me. Maybe it was marrying Nell, but, all of a sudden it came to me that the reason the Father and Son had no verbal differences was because both of them were infallible. I was not and neither were those to whom I was speaking. Fallible people are subject to errors in their thinking. All of us have been a little fanatical about some things until someone honked at us and guided us into the right lane.

I came to realize that Jesus was pointing out, that, in the final analysis, all oneness is between individuals. It is not organizational. It is not institutional. It is not materialisitic. As the old-time valentine used

to have it, "If you love me, like I love you, no knife can cut our love in two." So I started practicing love for those who desperately need it and I ended up down in the inner city among drug addicts, alcoholics, prostitutes and run-aways, telling them of the love of Jesus. A lot of churches think I am crazy, but remember I said it was not organizational. Love needs no stamp of approval. It requires no authoritative pronouncement. All it needs is a heart filled to overflowing. "Come to me, and out of your belly shall flow rivers of living water." It took a long time for me to get to him through the jungle-growth of philosophy, theology, church-ism, and all the rest of the religious gobble-de-gook, but, sure enough when I arrived the river began to flow.

The amazing thing is that a number of others have been touched by the waters. We all start with the one source but we flow different ways. Still, we are doing it together. We have learned what "oneness" is all about. We do not question whether one is a member of this religious segment or that. We are only concerned that he believe in Christ through the apostolic testimony and that he is obeying Him as far as he understands, and that he wants to help where help is so desperately, frighteningly needed. All kinds of people come for help from Pentecostals to Presbyterians, from Catholics to Congregationalists, from alcoholics to atheists. We help all of them. And all kinds extend help. I mean all kinds. You see, we have not isolated anyone with a registered trademark, a Good Housekeeping seal of approval, or a sectarian title. We merely call the place "The Cornerstone — An Adventure in Christian Fellowship." They know us by our lives and not by our words. And we are making a difference in the asphalt jungle.

Of course, all of this is peripheral. The central thought, the bull's-eye, the real target is "that the world may believe that thou has sent me." The world will be won to believe in Christ, when all who believe are one in Christ. Of course, it is nice to write about oneness as I am doing. I get a real bang out of if. And its nice to go to big meetings and listen to sometimes pompous discussions about what we need. But in the final analysis there are just two things that count — faith and love. These cannot be given in a charged atmosphere by fervent speakers, regardless of how loud they yell. Some of them have an axe to grind and bring their own grindstone with them.

Faith and love are fruits of the Spirit. If you go to bed some night and cannot sleep, and find yourself crying because your life is so empty and futile, those tears may be the first drops of the river of life-giving water flowing out of you. They mean you have finally come to Him. After all these years of noise and bombast, you have finally found him in the "still small voice." When Jesus spoke of the rivers of living water

He spoke of the Spirit. And when you arise the following morning with your jaw set in determination and your heart pounding in a strange way it has never throbbed before, you are on your way.

And the world will see it and sense it and begin to be drawn closer toward you because of Him. Oneness is the fruit from seed planted by those who are so irretrievably hooked to, and on, His purpose that they cannot be pried, shaken or beaten loose. While others are gathering to debate how it is brought about, and what each one will have to give up or take on, you will be enjoying it, basking in it, thrilling to it. You see, it does not come by debating *things.* Your life is His because His life is yours. It is just that simple! — *4420 Jamieson, Apt. 1C, St. Louis, MO. 63109*

BOOK NOTES

In this age of meaninglessness and boredom in a runaway world it is well to have such a helpful volume as *Lord, Don't Let Me Be Bored* by Lloyd Rediger. He tells us what boredom is and how to handle it. It is a skilful treatment of a difficult subject. $9.95 postpaid.

At a time when the Church of Christ eldership is being viewed with a critical eye it would be well for us to study Waymon D. Miller's *The Role of Elders in the New Testament Church.* It has been hailed as both biblical and good common sense. $4.25 postpaid.

We are pleased that K. C. Moser's studies in grace are still in print. The titles are *The Way of Salvation and The Gist of Romans.* They are $5.95 each, postpaid.

Ouida and I have been reading William Barclay's *A Spiritual Biography* again. It is a delightful story of a very interesting man. We can supply it for only $2.25 postpaid.

We offer once more the set of five matching volumes of C. S. Lewis' most popular writings. They make excellent gifts. They are *The Problem of Pain, The Screwtape Letters, The Great Divorce, Miracles,* and *Mere Christianity.* They are $3.75 each, postpaid, or all five for $16.00 postpaid.

The best dictionary of the Bible is probably *The New Westminister Dictionary of the Bible* by Henry S. Gehman. It has all the latest data and is well illustrated. $22.95 postpaid.

If you are interested in devotional matter, we recommend John Baillie's *A Diary of Private Prayer,* which because of its great value we order from Scotland. $5.95 postpaid.

Our own *The Stone-Campbell Movement* continues to be well-received, and you can get a copy free by sending us eight subs for this journal at $3.00 each, a total of $24.00; or you can buy one at $21.95, and when you pay in advance we pay the postage.

OUR CHANGING WORLD

In a recent issue of the *Gospel Advocate,* Dabney Phillips expresses concern that we "tamper with baptism when we say one is scripturally baptized if he is baptized 'without understanding the correct purpose'," which is for the remission of sins. He refers to the fact that Alexander Campbell quoted Acts 2:38 before he was baptized. I wrote to Dabney, kindly suggesting that his reference to Campbell could be misleading, for Robert Richardson, Campbell's biographer, makes it clear that it was another ten years before the reformer associated baptism with remission, even if he did quote Acts 2:38 at the time of his immersion. Moreover, both of the Campbells believed they were already Christians at the time of their immersion. They were immersed because they became convinced that it was the practice of the apostles.

If one reads a gay newspaper, such as the *Montrose Voice,* published in Houston where there are 300,000 homosexuals, he will notice numerous church ads. I counted 21 on the classified page, such as Presbyterians for Lesbian/Gay concerns, Gay and Lesbian Mormons, Dignit/Hon (gay Catholics) and An Acappella Chorus (Church of Christ). Along with virtually every denomination, the Montrose Church of Christ has a notice of its services. One thing should be apparent: the gays are not going to go away, and they will have their own churches if the "straights" kick them out.

The Disciple recently published "A Fresh Look at Baptism," which reveals what Disciples of Christ believe about baptism, which might surprise some of us. Among the clergy, 61% believe that the only form of New Testament baptism is immersion, with only 6% strongly disagreeing. As for baptism being "for the remission of sins," Acts 2:38, the old Disciple formula, 70% of the members and 67% of the preachers still agree with the affirmation. Most of the members do not want "open membership" practiced, and the study concludes that it remains an open question, with some insisting that inclusive membership does not imply approval of sprinkling or infant baptism.

Transformation (British and U.S.A.) calls ours "An Age of Holocaust," noting that an estimated 40-55 million babies are aborted each year worldwide, with the U.S.A. counting for 1-1½ million of these. Another 15 million children die each year worldwide from malnutrition and related diseases.

Even though the possibility of taking AIDS from a common cup is slight, British churches are going to use individual communion cups instead of the traditional single chalice. If this is not done, the priest is to wipe the cup with a clean cloth after each communicant partakes. One wonders if there is any such concern among our own Churches of Christ who opt to use the single chalice.

Writing in the bulletin of the Burke Rd. Church of Christ in Pasadena, Tx., John Wright identifies bad religion as having four characteristics: emphasizes law without grace; focuses on selected doctrines to the neglect of others; preoccupied with the mystical, the concealed, and the petty, thus ignoring what God has emphasized; frightens people with a God of terror rather than reassuring people with a God of love. He says bad religion degenerates into a superstition, even if it wears the name *Christian.*

Those who watch football on TV have seen those signs held by spectators in the stands. I recall seeing one that advised "READ JOHN" 3:16. Believe it or not, in this increasingly secularistic society of ours such a sign is not allowed. "HI MOM" is okay and the likes of "LOVE THEM HOGS," but not anything religious. When a patron was made to remove his sign about the Bible, he appealed to the Rutherford Institute, which has filed suit in federal court. The institute contends that since the stadium allows its patrons to express their views in this way it cannot discriminate against their religion.

READERS' EXCHANGE

What I appreciate most about your articles is that they make me think. I thank you for giving part of yourself to us and for your commitment to Jesus Christ. Aren't we blessed to be part of the fellowship of believers! — *Phyllis Stanley, Campden, Ontario*

Here is a check for the enclosed club. Take Ouida out to dinner for the difference. — *Bob and Janet Yarbrough, Bedford, Texas*

Jesus did not hesitate to associate with prostitutes, thieves, and tax collectors, but he was rough on the hypocritical Pharisees and authoritarian leaders. In the various papers I see a spirit different from this. — *Harold Fox, Edgar, Nebraska*